

**CITIZEN SCIENCE
IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE**

EDITED BY DÓRA KALYDY

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THE ROLE OF HUNGARIAN LIBRARIES IN SPREADING CITIZEN SCIENCE

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In Western Europe, citizen science is one of the most popular library tasks today, whether in public or academic libraries. An increasingly important goal in library strategy is to reach out to society and strengthen public involvement. At the same time, we see and feel that although the basic tasks and general guidelines of libraries are the same not only throughout Europe but throughout the world, the acceptance and use of citizen science in the Central and Eastern European region is different and has a different dynamic. Librarians in the region are trying to adopt the research methodology of citizen science in different ways. In Hungary, despite the fact that there are an increasing number of citizen science projects in natural sciences, the involvement of libraries was not at all typical until the 2020s. The Association of Hungarian Librarians recognised the potential and role of libraries in citizen science. Under the aegis of the Association, we launched the Citizen Science Roadshow in November 2024, bringing together libraries (and librarians).

The Citizen Science Roadshow

At the 2023 election of the Association of Hungarian Librarians, a new president and a new board took over the leadership, which also brought about a renewal of the association's work. This led to the first centrally announced mini-conference in September 2023, when we presented citizen science methodology and the only citizen science project at that time in which a library was an active participant, the Amber Habitat Research Project¹ initiated by Buda Campus of Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Even after the conference, many people saw and still see citizen science as a task rather than an opportunity, but this was nevertheless a turning point, when the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library in Budapest also showed keen interest in the new research methodology.

1 <https://entzkonyvtar.wordpress.com/borostyan-elohely-kutatas-projekt/>

We launched the roadshow more than a year later, which seems like a long time in reflection, but the organisers volunteered to take on the roadshow in addition to their existing work. It is important to emphasise that during this one-year preparation period, we tried to reach as wide an audience as possible and learned from European results and trends around us. In September 2024, foreign speakers Thomas Kaarstedt, Anne Katrine Overgaard (University of Southern Denmark), and Tiberius Ignat (Scientific Knowledge Services) helped with the preparations at a two-day English-language workshop, to which we invited all interested library directors and, of course, the president and secretary general of the Association. This was followed by a period of active organisation, and a permanent roadshow team was set up with the cooperation of Ágnes Kovácsné Koreny, Director General of the Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library, Budapest; Beáta Darabosné Maczkó, Director of the Entz Ferenc Library, Buda Campus, Hungarian University of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Dóra Kalydy, Deputy Director General of the Library and Information Centre. of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Three colleagues of the Metropolitan Library (Ágnes Kerégyártó, Emese Kovács, and Tamás Bedekovits) and one colleague (Andrea Simon) of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences participated in the preparatory meetings and serve as facilitators at the events.

Between November 2024 and November 2025, we held workshops at six locations (Budapest, Metropolitan Ervin Szabó Library, Szeged, Pécs, Miskolc, Eger, Győr). We selected all locations so that we could invite staff from different types of libraries to collaborate. The roadshow team plans to continue inviting staff from county libraries, university libraries, and church libraries in cities to present the opportunities available to them. At the Annual Conference of the Association of the Hungarian Librarians held in Debrecen in 2025, we also gave presentations on citizen science topics during the half-day program of the Academic and Special Libraries Section, presenting the structure of the roadshow and inviting projects and initiatives launched as a result of the roadshow with the aim of arousing interest in the topic among colleagues who have not yet heard of citizen science.

The Framework

The roadshow is essentially an off-site training session. The program consists of three presentations, each lasting 30 minutes. The first presentation is about the principles of citizen science and its significance for libraries (presenter:

Dóra Kalydy, Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences), followed by Ágnes Kovácsné Koreny, who presents foreign examples and introduces the citizen science projects of the Ervin Szabó Metropolitan Library. The third presentation is given by Beáta Darabosné Maczkó, head of the Entz Ferenc Library and Archives, on the Amber Habitat Research Project, which has been ongoing for two years and is being carried out using citizen science methodology.

The three speakers, who work in three different types of libraries, present the projects from three different perspectives, describing the circumstances of their implementation and the results achieved at their given institutions. Another clear goal is to highlight the cooperation between local libraries as a particularly good setting for citizen science projects. Public libraries and university libraries are natural partners, each strong in different areas, thus complementing each other well. During the morning training sessions, we incorporated two group tasks into the lectures, which allowed us to get faster feedback on the interpretation of what was heard and made the several-hour training session more interactive.

Our experience during the past years has proven that citizen science projects have a place in Hungarian libraries. The most significant achievement is that library managers have recognised that citizen science projects can help them raise awareness of their services and activities. Participation in citizen science projects is a fundamental task for both public and university libraries. With the methodology of research support, we simultaneously add value and build the local community. The aim of the Roadshow team is to visit one location per every second month over the next year, and then we would like to organize a professional day for those libraries and librarians who participated in a local training session. This program provides an opportunity to get to know each other and help each other move forward.

University courses

The Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences is a committed supporter and implementer of Open Science, so in addition to organizing the roadshow, we are also making efforts to ensure that citizen science is included in university courses. There are two types of training: one is specifically for those who will be facilitators of citizen science projects,

working in aggregators, libraries, museums, or archives, or even teachers in local communities, who can bring together local initiatives and thus support researchers and volunteers.

We have launched such a course at University of Tokaj under the framework of the Cultural Heritage Department, which is open to all students (pedagogues, tourism professionals, cultural heritage experts, viticulturists and winemakers). The course consists of 12 lectures and aims to introduce students to the basics of citizen science research methodology and the structure of individual projects, so that students are already familiar with the concept of citizen science during their Bachelor's programme to see the potential it offers, so that if they are later approached with such a request by a researcher or the volunteers themselves, they will know not only the basic concepts but also where to find more information.

The other type of training is specifically designed for PhD students. The course gives young researchers at the beginning of their careers the opportunity to learn about citizen science research methodology and how to apply it in their own work. An important objective of the course is to help students understand the research methodology process through practical examples. Through an independent project assignment, they will develop a citizen science project related to their field of expertise. The independent project assignment will give them the opportunity to process, apply, and further develop the knowledge they have gained during the lectures. We plan to implement the course at the University of Sopron, integrating it into the Research Support course, where students can apply the research methodology of citizen science to their existing knowledge of open science.

Conclusion

Experience in recent years has shown that the proactive role of libraries and their achievements and experience in various areas of open science greatly contribute to the effectiveness of citizen science programs and courses. In Central and Eastern Europe, the perception and role of libraries is very different from that in Western Europe, but it is clear that involvement in citizen science projects strengthens and supports trust in library services as well.